



UNIVERSITY WRITING STYLE GUIDE

QUICK GUIDE

Abbreviations

Use full terms in running text e.g. South Australia not SA.

Acronyms

Consider that the audience may not be from Australia or familiar with the local higher education context. Always spell out an acronym the first time it is expressed, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Write only the acronym from that point on in the same communication.

Active versus passive sentence construction

Generally, an active sentence is easier to read than a passive sentence. An active sentence is where the subject is undertaking the action e.g. 'The chairman signed the contract this morning'.

A passive sentence is where the subject is being acted upon e.g. 'The contract was signed this morning by the chairman'.

Active sentences are generally shorter than passive sentences and use stronger verbs that bring the activity to life. Passive sentences are less direct. Passive sentence construction is typically used for report style writing where personal pronouns are removed from the text. Passive sentence construction can also cause ambiguity or hide responsibility for an action and therefore at times be a less transparent way of writing.

Active sentence

'Sarah decided that the company would invest the budget in muffins.'

Passive sentence

'It was decided that the company would invest the budget in muffins.'

And not &

Use the word 'and' instead of an ampersand in full text and where space allows, unless of course the ampersand is part of the proper name.

Capitals

No initial capital for 'school', 'faculty', 'centre', 'government', 'parliament', 'department', 'library', 'plan' etc. When used generically or when not part of a specific title.

Dates

It is Australian standard to present dates in the following way:

- Monday 23 December 2013
- Monday 23rd December 2013
- Monday December 23, 2013

Dot point lists

Bulleted lists should follow a consistent structure; the beginning of each dot point in the list should be parallel in structure (have the same grammatical structure).

If the list is presented as a series of full sentences, then normal sentence structure, format and punctuation (including capitalisation and full stops) rules apply after the lead-in sentence. The lead-in sentence should introduce the information and include a colon at the end.

If the list contains sentence fragments, then the structure should be parallel, initial capital only applied to the lead-in sentence and a full stop is allocated only at the end (or last item) of the list to complete the sentence.

Em dash and en dash

Em dash no spaces either side when linking sentences within a paragraph –

En dash between spans of numbers –

Headings and heading hierarchies

Headings are fundamental to textual contrast: they are signposts to readers. A clear and logical heading hierarchy shows the reader the relative importance of the information. On websites headings play an important role in accessibility and there are strict [guidelines](#) that need to be followed for all University websites.

Job titles

Job titles are common nouns unless specifically in relation to a person's particular title e.g.:

'Upon completion of the degree, she became a business analyst.'

'Sarah's official title is Sarah Jones, Business Analyst, Viterra.'

'Potential careers for a graduate are: doctor, nurse, engineer, manager.'

Keep it simple

Use 'and' instead of 'as well as'; 'also' instead of 'in addition to'.

Numbers as words

Numbers from one to nine are written as words. Numbers 10 and above are written in digits except when starting a sentence e.g. Ninety students applied for the degree.

One to nine

10–10,000*

*except when talking about course unit values; then use numerals, e.g. 3-unit course

Practise v. practice

The definitions of practise and practice are very similar, but the main difference is that practise is a verb and practice is a noun, e.g.:

'The Bachelor of Nursing is designed to prepare students who wish to become registered nurses for **practice** in a wide variety of clinical and non-clinical areas.'

In this instance **practice** refers to the exercise of a profession or occupation, in this case nursing.

'The Bachelor of Nursing is structured over an extended academic year in order to facilitate clinical placements and provide ample time for students to **practise** the skills required by registered nurses.'

In this instance **practise** refers to performing or doing something repeatedly in order to acquire skill or proficiency in that activity.

Proper names

Please provide the proper name of a faculty, department, organisation, qualification or government agency not the acronym or localised/colloquial version of the name such as HumSS, Elder Con, TESOL or SARDI.

Punctuation with e.g. and i.e.

It is recommended to keep the stops in 'e.g.' and 'i.e.' as it follows the general rule of using full stops for abbreviated words.

Spelling

As an Australian based institution its English language communications should reflect Australian spelling as reflected in the Macquarie dictionary (Australian standard reference). Therefore words such as 'organisation' and 'specialisation', should be spelled with an 's' not a 'z'.

Terminology

Consider that the audience may not be from Australia and consequently, where possible, avoid use terms such as Commonwealth Government that internationally is more readily associated with the Commonwealth of Nations (formerly the British Empire). It is preferable to use terms such as Australian Government and Australian Parliament.

Time

In Australia, the recommended way to present time is: 9 am or 9.00 am

Because they are always preceded by a numeral, am and pm can be shown without stops.

University

We use a capital 'U' when referring to the University of Adelaide only.

Use plain English

A simple word is preferable to a longer word e.g. 'use' instead of 'utilise', 'help' instead of 'assist'.